

Daily Herald Editorial, April 25, 2008

Today, nearly seven years after terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, it is hard to believe those listed on our government's "no fly list" can legally purchase guns.

What is Congress waiting for?

Of course, gun rights advocates are correct that the flaw in gun legislation is that criminals never bother obeying laws.

Still, if there is no law restricting gun purchases by people our government officials have legally and carefully determined are a threat, then there would be no law to disobey and no charge could be brought.

Yes, gun rights advocates are correct that we need better enforcement of the laws already on our books. And yes, it's true, as far as we know now, that current laws and procedures were obeyed by the Northern Illinois University shooter. More laws are not a panacea.

Still, we believe closing the no-fly-list loophole and others are reasonable attempts at restrictions that might prevent violence. They should be adopted by Congress as soon as possible.

Currently, guns can be purchased at trade shows in many states without a background check of the buyer. Illinois has a law that closes this loophole, but background checks at trade shows need to be done nationally, via congressional legislation.

And dealers whose licenses to sell have been revoked are allowed to sell their remaining inventory off to buyers who are not subjected to background checks.

Employees of gun stores also are not subjected to any sort of a background check, according to Rep. Mark Kirk, a Highland Park Republican, and Palatine Mayor Rita Mullins.

We run background checks on our doctors, our nurses, our teachers. Even our cosmetologists must be licensed and registered.

If we're conducting criminal background checks on people who seek to purchase firearms in stores, then it stands to reason for practicality's sake that we also should run criminal background checks on people who seek to buy them at trade shows or from dealers liquidating stock.

Certainly the cost of closing these loopholes cannot be too great as the system already is in place to check the backgrounds of those who purchase from stores.

We are kidding ourselves if we think criminals bent on violence aren't aware of these gaping holes in the system.

It seems reasonable and wise to close all these loopholes and require a uniform system that checks all purchasers and all sellers without regard to where the purchases happen to be occurring.

Mullins, who has a firearm owners ID card and who has seen her community wracked by the gun violence of the Brown's Chicken slayings, noted these measures aren't intended to take guns out of the hands of sportsmen. They focus on handguns and assault weapons used for human violence.

"Illegal handguns equals blood money, the blood of our children," she said.

We hold no illusions that a uniform system is going to eradicate all gun violence by criminals.

But if such a uniform system of checks prevents even a few guns from getting into the wrong hands, isn't that worthwhile?